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UNCLAS MUSCAT 001103

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, NEA/P, IIP/G/NEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMAN ONLINE: IEDs, INTERFERENCE, AND IMMIGRATION

1. Summary: The Omani Internet message boards "al-Sablah" and "al-Majarra" are the liveliest and most comprehensive Arabic-language fora for political and social discourse in the country, touching on issues and personalities rarely addressed in the conventional media. While not totally free, nor wholly reflective of Omani public opinion, these popular sites nevertheless offer a worthwhile window into the hot topics and unvarnished views of the day. This edition of Oman Online contains the following topics:

-- Poll On The London Bombings
-- God vs. America
-- GCC Naturalization

End summary.

A Double-Decker Poll

2. Al-Sablah's latest unscientific poll asked two questions: "Do you approve of the London bombings, and who do you think will benefit from them?" Out of 140 respondents, 102 (73%) expressed opposition to the attacks while 69 (49%) believed "the Jews will benefit the most from the bombings." By way of explanation, one author wrote, "Now the Americans and the British will have a legal excuse to discriminate against Arabs and Muslims, using the same excuse: fighting terrorism." Voicing the feelings of the 73%, one contributor observed, "If it is true that somebody benefited from the bombings, it is equally true that many more were losers. A lot of people were killed and injured." Another pleaded, "No more killing people, no more terrorism, and no more freedom down the drain!"

My Money's On God

3. A forum member posed the question, "What do Arabs have to fear from Americans interfering in the internal policies of their countries? After all, who is stronger: God or America?" The topic generated many responses, some of which attempted to explain the apparent submissive nature of Arab leaders. "Nobody fears America, but Arab leaders fear that their power will be taken away if they don't comply with American demands. Look what happened to Saddam," offered one writer. Agreed another, "Muslim leaders are scared that they will lose the power to force the Ummah (nation) to do what they want."

4. The topic provoked an unanticipated wave of praise for the United States, including the following declaration: "America is a perfect country. It reached this position of power in the world through the hard and honest work of its people. The people believe in democracy, and the democratic system that exists in the U.S. is unmatched anywhere else." Another wrote, "We should take advantage of the positive aspects of American life - like technology and education - rather than calling for its destruction."

Have Passport, Will Travel?

5. Immigration and naturalization issues surfaced in al-Sablah when a member asked, "What would you do if you were granted the nationality of another GCC country?" Some respondents felt this was a strange idea, with one stating, "Nobody wants another nationality, and the people who would accept it are traitors." But many disagreed; "I don't see any harm in accepting the nationality of another country, particularly if that country is the UAE," noted a writer. Another revealed, "If I could not get a job in my own country, I would seek employment elsewhere - even if it meant becoming a citizen of another nation." One contributor summed up, "Becoming a naturalized citizen of another country is not a betrayal. The real traitors are those officials who misuse their power to make others' lives miserable."

BALTIMORE